

Another charter school in Lewiston?



LEWISTON — The School Committee on Monday discussed options for using Longley and Martel elementary school buildings once a larger elementary school is built.

One option is to open another charter school to ease crowding at Lewiston High School.

Bob Kauts, executive director of the Maine Charter School Commission, and Deb Plowman, Maine Department of Education's director of policies and programs, presented specifics and steps to be taken should there be another charter school.

Charter schools are similar to public schools, but are not run directly by the city. The School Committee would create a detailed agreement and plan with the school, but would not have a say once it's operating.

A few committee members weren't sure how a charter school would benefit the School Department.

"What would be the benefit for the Lewiston School Committee to back a charter school we have no control over?" committee member Paul St. Pierre said.

The committee will continue to discuss the idea of backing a new charter school.

The other two options for Longley and Martel schools discussed at Monday's meeting were:

- * Expedition Learning, a program in which students work together on something that has real-world consequences, which in other schools has resulted in the students feeling more connected, compelled and engaged in their work.

- * Alternative Education Program, which is in place at the high school. The program is focused on getting students with severe social and emotional problems a quality education. Alternative education organizers hope to grow the program and eventually move it to a separate building.

Other issues discussed at the meeting were updates to the school website, updated health and safety policies, and the evaluation of Superintendent Bill Webster. The evaluation is required annually and is done in three steps: the superintendent's personal reflections, a confidential survey done by a number of staff and an assessment form filled out by each member of the School Committee.